



## City of Needles, California Request for City Council Action

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CITY COUNCIL  NPUA  HACN

Regular  Special

**Meeting Date:** June 9, 2026

**Title:** Provide Direction Regarding the Preparation and Submittal of an Application to the CalRecycle Beverage Container Redemption Innovation Grant Program Cycle 9 for the Needles Pilot Reverse Vending Machine Project

**Background:** The Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) administers a program to provide opportunities to support start-up costs for reverse-vending machine (RVM) programs. The goal is to increase the California Refund Value (CRV) beverage container redemption opportunities that utilize innovative projects.

Applicants are eligible to apply for new recycling center businesses. A new recycling center business is defined as an applicant who intends to apply and is eligible to become, a certified recycling center. The new recycling center must be certified and permitted under local authority prior to the issuance of the Notice to Proceed (NTP) email.

Since the closure of Cam Dan Recycle Center in 2016, there have been no redemption facilities within a reasonable area for residents to redeem bottles and cans for CRV value. Residents currently have limited practical access to California Redemption Value (CRV) redemption opportunities, requiring travel outside the community to redeem eligible beverage containers. The proposed project would improve local access to recycling services, increase CRV redemption opportunities, and support litter reduction and waste diversion efforts.

Staff has identified City-owned property adjacent to the Needles Animal Shelter at Duke Watkins Park as the preferred location for the pilot project. The final site configuration and project design would be completed during project development should funding be awarded. City Staff has prepared a scope of work to develop a "Needles Pilot Reverse Vending Machine Project". The project scope of work includes the installation of two dual reverse vending machines, paving an area for the machines, parking spots with ADA compliance, fencing to secure the area, shade structures to protect the RVMs and water facilities to keep the site clean. The proposed project includes fencing and site security measures to minimize vandalism and unauthorized access. Additional security measures, including lighting and surveillance, would be evaluated during project design.

The proposed reverse vending machines are a Tomra T70 dual-sized. Common questions regarding the RVM are;

**How much can RVM hold / size?**

1100 flattened plastic bottles, 3200 crushed cans, 300 crushed glass bottles

**How does the user verify their residence?**

Name, email and address are submitted when the app is downloaded, but no verification from the company on whether the information is accurate

**Does RVM print a ticket for a refund? Does it hold cash? Digital payment via their app**

**If the user does not have a smartphone is there any other option for using the machine?** The RVM has the ability to print vouchers that can be scanned, and validated and then paid out. Digital payment and user registration features provide an additional mechanism to discourage fraudulent redemption activity and help ensure compliance with California CRV program requirements.

**Is there any concern for the temperature of the environment the machine will be stored in?** The client might keep this machine outdoors where temperatures can reach up to 120°. Would the machine malfunction in those conditions? The RVM cannot be in the direct sun. We can build a shed around it or it can be placed in a location not in direct sunlight. I have an installation in Calexico and El Centro with very similar climate conditions, and the equipment is running fine.

**Is it clear how many bottles can be returned on average in a 1-minute time span?** Yes, the containers per minute is noted on the brochure I sent last week, but we find that the speed is dictated by the consumer feeding it. The brochure states up to 45 containers/minute.

**Does the machine function correctly if cans are crushed?** If a can has been crushed, like in a can crusher, for instance, then no. If a can has dents on the sides, etc., yes.

**Is there a monthly service fee for the RVM?** No

The proposed project will include staff time to collect the material from the RVM's and store the material at the Public Works Yard. City staff is in discussions with Republic Services regarding transportation of collected materials to a certified recycling facility where the City would redeem eligible California Redemption Value (CRV) materials and receive reimbursement for qualifying containers. There is no cost to the city during the initial pilot year; thereafter, there is regular maintenance required by the Public Works Department to wash the station and collect the material. Grant funding would support site development, ADA improvements, utility connections, paving, fencing, shade structures, equipment acquisition, security measures, project administration, and related project costs.

**The deadline for the grant application is June 23, 2026.** The grant application will be completed by city staff if the City Council wishes to proceed with the proposed project.

**Fiscal Impact:** The grant program does not require a local match. Staff anticipates requesting approximately \$1,000,000 in grant funding. Initial project capital costs and equipment purchases would be funded through the grant if awarded. City staff time associated with project administration, material collection, and oversight would be absorbed within existing departmental budgets. The minimum grant award is \$400,000, and the max is \$2,500,000.

**Environmental Impact:** The proposed action is limited to providing direction regarding the preparation and submittal of a grant application. No physical construction or project approval is being considered at this time. Any future project implementation would be evaluated for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as required.

**Recommendation:** Provide Direction Regarding the Preparation and Submittal of an Application to the CalRecycle Beverage Container Redemption Innovation Grant Program Cycle 9 for the Needles Pilot Reverse Vending Machine Project

**Submitted By:** Rainie Torrance, Utility Manager

**City Manager Approval:** Patrick J. Martinez

Date: 6/3/2026

**Other Department Approval (when required):** \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_